

For Immediate Release

## **From Blight to Homeownership: Rehab Construction Project Creates New Homes in Frog Hollow Despite Challenges Created by the Pandemic**

Hartford, CT, July 18, 2024

SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance), a partnership between Connecticut Children's, Hartford Hospital and Trinity College, will hold an open house and ribbon cutting event to celebrate the completion of construction of their latest homeownership project, at 1:30 pm on Thursday, July 18, 2024, at **41 Madison Street**, Hartford, CT. *(Not Madison Avenue which is in another neighborhood, but Madison Street)*

This celebrates the completion of Cityscape Phase VII, which will create four new homeownership opportunities on Madison and Squire Streets in Frog Hollow. The four formerly vacant historic properties represent a total of 11 housing units. One of the properties was owned by an absentee landlord who abandoned it to blight and illegal activity. Now that they are completed, the properties will be purchased by low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers. An additional benefit is that the renovations will put these properties back on the city's tax rolls.

“Renovating these vacant, blighted properties improves public safety, provides a family with a healthy home in which to build generational wealth, and gives the community a committed neighbor who will take pride in their property. The building at 41 Madison had an irresponsible absentee owner and was an eyesore used by squatters and drug dealers,” explains SINA Executive Director Melvyn Colon. “SINA’s purchase of it at a bank auction, and the subsequent work to rehab it and convert it into a homeownership opportunity, is the culmination of our work with a coalition of neighborhood residents to address these problems.”

This was a particularly challenging project to complete because construction began during the pandemic. Costs shot up during construction and it was very difficult to find capable contractors to work on this historic renovation.

Because of this we are doubly grateful to everyone who contributed to this project. “We received \$1.1 million from the State of Connecticut Department of Housing to continue this important work,” says Colon. “We are grateful to Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno, to Senator John Fonfara for his support, and to the Local Initiative Support Corporation for providing an \$800,000 construction loan. Other funders who support our housing programs include the City of Hartford, Travelers Foundation, UIL Holdings, Eversource, Webster Bank, and M&T Bank.”

All four buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and were restored with attention to period details. The construction meets Energy Star 3.5 standards, including energy-efficient insulation, windows and heating systems, plus EV plugs for electric cars. Hartford Hospital President Bimal Patel said “It’s remarkable that our three institutions have banded together in such a strong partnership to improve the quality of life in this community. That includes the health, safety and economic vitality of the neighborhood, its residents and students, and the well-being of our employees, patients and visitors. It’s clear that our housing and community economic development efforts through SINA are aligned with neighborhood safety.”

James E. Shmerling, DHA, FACHE, President/CEO of Connecticut's Children's, said "I am delighted to celebrate a partnership that helps children in South Central Hartford grow, learn and succeed in a safe, supportive environment. Social determinants—the circumstances in which people live and work—have a powerful influence on health. That's why Connecticut Children's has embraced a broad definition of community that includes mitigation efforts and work to ensure safe, healthy housing for all Hartford families."

"Trinity College President Joanne Berger-Sweeney said, "Public-private partnerships are vital for moving a community forward. Together with Hartford Hospital and Connecticut Children's Medical Center, SINA has been key in attracting investment that redeveloped 85 buildings, creating nearly 200 homes that provide stability for families and our neighborhood. These efforts greatly increase safety and quality of life for all residents, including our students, faculty, and staff, and we are proud to work together to reach our shared goals."

For more information:

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*Attendees:*

CT Department of Housing Commissioner: Seila Mosquera-Bruno

Trinity College Chief of Staff/ CT Democratic Majority Leader: Jason Rojas

Mayor Arunan Arulampalam

CT Children's Senior Director External Relations: Jane Baird

LISC Executive Director: Jim Horan

The Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) is a partnership between Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford Hospital and Trinity College. SINA's mission is to work cooperatively with community stakeholders to restore economic vitality and improve the quality of life for the benefit of the people who live, work, visit, study and play in the neighborhoods of South Central Hartford.

*See below for before and after pictures of properties at 39 and 41 Madison Street*



39 Madison Street Before – front elevation



39 Madison Street After – front elevation



41 Madison Street Before – front elevation



41 Madison Street After – front elevation